

OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT GLOSSARY

Activities Programs or services (such as tutoring, lectures, storytelling) provided to the end user by the library. The specific jobs (such as recruiting and training volunteers, publicizing a lecture series) are called *tasks*. **Answers the question: “What does the library do?”**

Community Goals relate to the needs of the community and are beyond the scope of the library alone; the library’s program is usually one part of a larger effort to meet a community goal. (For example, increase school readiness among elementary school children, decrease juvenile delinquency in teens, increase socialization by isolated elders) **Answers the question: “What does the community hope to achieve in response to an identified community need?”**

Evaluation Measurement or verification of outcomes using the indicators in relation to the selected targets. Data collection methods include interviews, pre and post-testing, professional observation, self-administered surveys.

Goals In evaluation, there are two types of goals. Both are developed in response to a demonstrated need, broad in scope and long range. In *traditional evaluation*, goals reflect the mission of the library. In *outcomes measurement*, goals reflect the ultimate impacts desired for the targeted users, and usually relate to larger community goals. **Answers the question: “What does the library hope to achieve for the users ?”**

Indicators Measurable characteristics or changes that indicate achievement of the outcome. Behaviors which demonstrate changes in knowledge, skills, behavior, or attitudes -- or that imply such changes. The amount of expected change is part of the indicator. (E.g. increase in one reading level within one year; ability to use a database independently; successful completion of sample citizenship exam). To gauge success for the *participant*. **Answers the question: “What will we measure to know that participants experienced the intended outcome(s)?”**

Inputs Resources (such as money, staff, volunteers, facilities, collections, community partners) used to plan and provide a program or service. Also constraints on a program such as laws, regulations, funding requirements. **Answers the question: “What do we have to work with?”**

Intermediate outcomes Milestones in the life of a project, events that are necessary for successful outcomes. Points at which project staff must decide whether to continue current activities or to modify them in order to achieve the desired outcomes. (E.g. In a family literacy project with the desired outcome of increasing family reading at home, attendance at library story times may be considered necessary. So the number of participants signing up for the first story time may be a milestone in the project.) Sometimes called initial, short-term or interim outcomes.

Outcome Benefits to the *end user* that demonstrate the effectiveness of the program or service. Usually are changes in knowledge, skills, behavior, attitude, or condition. Also called *impacts* or *results*. **Answers the question: “What difference did our program make to the participant?”**

Outcome Measure Statement of indicator + target + data collection method for a specific outcome. E.g. “90% of program participants will double the amount of time reading to their children as measured on a pre- and post- program questionnaire.”

Outcomes Measurement A user-centered approach to assessment. A qualitative form of evaluation. Also known as *outcome evaluation*, *outcomes-based evaluation*, *outcomes assessment*, or *results-based evaluation*.

Outcomes Measurement Plan Description of the library goal, the participants the program expects to affect, inputs, services, outputs, outcomes, indicators, targets, and data collection methods for the entire program. Sometimes called a *logic model*.

Outputs Products resulting from the inputs and activities of the library. Volume of successful activities. Objectively quantified measures (such as number of books circulated, number of hours devoted to homework assistance, or number of attendees at an author reading). In traditional evaluation, projected outputs with a timeline attached are referred to as *objectives*. **Answers the question: “How much did the library do?”**

Targets Numerical standards or criteria of success for your program that state the expected proportion of outcomes. (E.g. 75% of participants reporting a specified effect six months after a program; 20% of attendees at resume writing workshops report getting job interviews). Targets are used to gauge success of the *library’s program*. **Answers the question: “How will we know that our program is a success?”**

Tasks The specific jobs (such as recruiting and training volunteers or publicizing a lecture series) staff or volunteers must do to be able to provide successful programs or services.